



World Chronicle

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IRAQ

Amb. Rolf EKEUS, Executive Chairman of the United Nations Special Commission on Iraq, reviews the work of the Commission in light of recently increasing Iraqi cooperation and new revelations regarding their weapons programmes. Iraq's chemical and biological capability was much bigger and more dangerous than was previously known by the Commission. When Iraq offers credible documents indicating that their weapons have been destroyed, the Commission will move quickly to recommend lifting the sanctions. Ambassador Ekeus believes that Iraq is no longer a threat to the countries of the region.

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ANNOUNCER: From United Nations Headquarters in New York, this is **World Chronicle**, an unedited interview programme about major global issues. Here now to introduce our guest is the host of today's **World Chronicle**.

LITTLEJOHNS: I'm Michael Littlejohns, and this is **World Chronicle**.

It's been more than four years since the end of the gulf war, when the United Nations established the Special Commission on Iraq to monitor the elimination of their weapons of mass destruction. And while much of Iraq's most advanced military and technological capability has been destroyed, the process has been long and complicated.

With us today to update us on the latest developments and to discuss Iraq's compliance and whether or not the sanctions imposed by the Security Council should be lifted is Ambassador Rolf Ekeus, Executive Chairman of the Special Commission since its inception in 1991.

Joining me to talk with Ambassador Ekeus are Anthony Goodman of Reuters and Raghida Dergham of *Al-Hayat* of London. Ambassador Ekeus, welcome to **World Chronicle**.

Ambassador, your inspectors uncovered some rather nasty things that the Iraqis apparently were up to, the development of germ weapons and chemical weapons for possible gas warfare. And of course the consequences could have been horrendous if these weapons had actually been used. How close do you think the Iraqis may have been to employing this kind of warfare?

EKEUS: Just before the war Iraq had this so-called crash programme where it produced a large amount of biological agents, if you concentrate on the biology issue -- agents like, first of all, anthrax and botulinum. And these amounts of agents were, in late 1990, December 1990, brought from their storage sites to munition depots, where they were filled into bombs and into long-range missiles.

LITTLEJOHNS: So they were actually ready to go.

EKEUS: They were more than that. From there -- this was a filling station -- they were brought out to air bases, and, indeed, put on a hair trigger situation. And the most recent information we have is that the -- also certain rules for direct engagement were given, so one didn't need complete clearance from Baghdad. Say, in the case of attacks on Baghdad, the commanders were free to release these weapons against their enemies.

LITTLEJOHNS: But anthrax and these other nasty bugs, isn't there -- if you can call them that -- isn't there a risk that they could have come back on the Iraqi side, the wind could catch them and --

EKEUS: If they are used in close-range battlefield situations, definitely a weather problem. One has to watch the weather development. But if you use them in, I would say,

a strategic mode, long-range mode or, as it was planned, either through missiles or through bombs delivered via airplanes, then it would be no problem for the sending side. It's the receiving end which would take all the trouble.

LITTLEJOHNS: Still, there would have been a strong risk that an epidemic in Iraq or wherever, Kuwait, could have spread around the world. Or certainly within the Middle East region.

EKEUS: No, it is not. These two types, we're told -- the most notorious in this case -- were not epidemic in character. They are agents which are -- when they are inhaled or hitting a person, they are killing that person, but they are not spreading in that sense. So it was more -- the limiting factor is how wide is the biological cloud spread.

GOODMAN: Ambassador Ekeus, you just said there were rules of engagement when these weapons could be used. You meant chemical and biological, did you not?

EKEUS: Yes, indeed. But the news for me was biological.

GOODMAN: And could you tell us a little bit more? You said if there were attacks on Baghdad -- obviously a land attack, not air, I take it? Because there were air attacks and there was no use of such weapons. So could you tell us a little bit more about what these rules are and what they authorized commanders to do? And what level of command, how low down could the decision be taken?

EKEUS: We have inquired a little, started inquisition there, and we are still to conclude the investigations. But there were, so to say, two levels of decision, one or one -- two cases. Let's say the normal case was that, I take it, that the supreme command should decide upon the use of these weapons, in a specific situation, decided closely by that person or that leadership. The other situation was that, imagine that Iraq's communication -- Baghdad's communication, or the central command was cut off through military action directed against Iraq: there the scenario was free right for the commanders concerned to release -- or they were under instructions to release these weapons against their enemies, against other countries, other capitals, and enemy troops.

GOODMAN: Chemical and biological?

EKEUS: Chemical and biological.

GOODMAN: And what rank commander? I mean, divisional commanders? Front commanders? How high?

EKEUS: I don't know as yet. The bombs were at two air bases, as you know, so I take it the base commander was probably.

GOODMAN: But it never came into effect because Baghdad was never cut off? Is that why it was never used?

EKEUS: Well, I can't go further because we haven't investigated that fully.

GOODMAN: And which capitals?

EKEUS: Well, it was the enemy, what Iraq considered its enemies in the region.

GOODMAN: Several.

EKEUS: Yes.

DERGHAM: Ambassador, today, after four years of work, and since the gulf war, today can you give us an idea, how much if any does Iraq have of prohibited weapons of mass destruction?

EKEUS: I cannot do that. If we take again the biological weapons -- but I will discuss the others also -- the biological weapons, we have a situation where Iraq has now admitted production, large-scale production of agent. Our problem is now to verify that these weapons have been destroyed. Iraq has declared to us that these weapons were destroyed after the gulf war, in the summer, around '91. But our problem is, did Iraq really do that? It's a matter of credibility. Iraq cannot give us any proof so far. According to the Iraqi responsible, there were oral instructions given. So it's very difficult to ascertain that. So it's a major and complex task for our scientists to figure out if there really was a destruction. And that is obviously a very sensitive political issue, if there was destruction or not. In the chemical area, it appears now that Iraq had even acquired more agents, especially precursors of these advanced weapons systems, the chemical agent they were working on, namely VX.

LITTLEJOHNS: VX? What's VX?

EKEUS: VX, yes. That is a nerve-related agent --

LITTLEJOHNS: Nerve-related?

EKEUS: Yes. Much more lethal than Sarin, which is --

LITTLEJOHNS: You can be paralysed by it?

EKEUS: Yes. So this area, we now have new worries, which we are obviously in the process of investigating. So suddenly we are thrown back a little from our earlier report to the Security Council. In the missiles area it's more technically complicated, but even there there are some new question marks coming up.

DERGHAM: If you were to give us an idea, just so that we understand the work of the Commission, if you were to give us an idea, ratio-wise, how much have you accomplished and how much is there left, do you feel proud that you've accomplished a lot? And isn't there just a bit left, technically speaking? Aside from the politics.

EKEUS: Well, evidently we have managed to clarify, identify the big weapons programmes as such. With the exception of biology, it was done before. Biology is recent. We -- well, it is difficult to say how much is left, as we don't really know the totality. But we have a good understanding of which were the scientists, which were the facilities

involved. And we hope to clarify in more detail these remaining issues. There are, however, unclear issues. It may be so that all is destroyed. But we have to verify it.

DERGHAM: Well, one more try, just to understand, whether this -- what remains to be done: From what you know right now, is it your assessment that it will take months or years?

EKEUS: It will take some considerable time, but we have to recall that we are totally dependent on Iraq's cooperation. If Iraq provides us early off with documentation, for instance, credible information, it can be moved quite quickly. We will focus all our assets to get speedy clarification of these issues.

DERGHAM: But give us an idea of what's quite quickly, what's a considerable time. I mean, you use these terms, and everybody has an interpretation of that. What's quite quickly, what's a considerable time?

EKEUS: Yes. I've used such assessments before, and always there is a tendency to take the best possible, so to say, scenario. It has turned out always to be the worst possible. I've always said if Iraq gives us full disclosure and complete answers and documentation, it will be a matter of months, not years.

DERGHAM: Right.

EKEUS: I've stated that several times. And then people come back, "Now it's years, what's the problem with you guys?" Well, we have to say Iraq has been misleading us. They have seriously misled us and the international community on the biological issue. They said they had nothing, they had only 10 research programmes; now they have a major weapons programme with a high alert programme, with great risk for the whole region. These are examples of how difficult it is for us to answer.

LITTLEJOHNS: Do you feel that they are still misleading you?

EKEUS: Well, now they say "We have stopped misleading you. From now on," -- say, from what date they say, "from summer, in the autumn '95 we will tell the truth." Before, they admit now, "We misled you", they admit, "We lied to you." Now the question is can we trust them. We can't of course take their word. We need to look for the facts and investigate this.

LITTLEJOHNS: Wasn't it Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz who said that you were being misled because this guy who fled to Jordan --

DERGHAM: Hussein Kamel. Hussein Kamel.

ANTHONY GOODMAN: Hussein Kamel.

EKEUS: Yes.

LITTLEJOHNS: -- yes -- had covered up? Do you buy that?

EKEUS: No, I don't do that. Definitely General Hussein Kamel was responsible both for production of the programme and at least partly for the management of the military industrial activities, even after the war. He was definitely involved in the decision-making process. But these were collective decisions, and first of all taken by the President of the country himself.

DERGHAM: You met Hussein Kamel in Jordan. He is of course the son-in-law of Saddam Hussain. How much did you learn about the dealings of the Iraqis right now with the Commission? Have you learned that he really gave -- did he give you any new information as to how much could they have been still concealing or revealing?

EKEUS: When I've talked to him, he has fundamentally taken the line of confirming more what we already know, what we have already obtained in Baghdad. On the other side, he adds some information. He widens the understanding of the decision-making process; he gives us very important insight into the developments of their political thought processes. So it has helped. And especially, of course, some additional information is important for us to calibrate the information we get from Iraq.

LITTLEJOHNS: This is World Chronicle. Our guest is Ambassador Rolf Ekeus, Executive Chairman of the United Nations Special Commission on Iraq. Tony Goodman.

GOODMAN: I take it, Ambassador, there's no suspicion that his defection in August was part of a disinformation campaign? In other words, that he defected with the knowledge of his authorities?

EKEUS: Well, I've heard persons in the region, relatively well-informed observers, speculate about that. My impression -- I can't quarrel with anyone, but our impression is that he was in genuine difficulties with his leadership and he decided to take this political action as taken. But that's -- I can't promise that that is correct.

GOODMAN: The Jordanian Foreign Minister did say the other day that he defected with \$30 million, so he must have been raiding his piggy bank rather at some length before he defected. And it's strange that he could defect with such a huge sum, but....

EKEUS: Well, I guess it was very -- the information I obtained, it was very carefully planned, the move. It was not a panicky move, it was a move that was carefully calculated.

GOODMAN: In all the four years that you've been involved in this work, among the discoveries in the various areas of weapons of mass destruction, did you come across any indication that some, or all of this, or much of this was known to major powers, but they didn't do anything about it at the time?

EKEUS: No, I wouldn't -- yes and no. It was notorious that Iraq had chemical weapons. We all knew that. And those were the --

GOODMAN: And they had used it, of course, in the gulf war with Iran.

EKEUS: Yes. So this was well known. There were obvious suspicions about a nuclear programme. But I think the knowledge was very limited, surprisingly weak, I must say. And in biology, that was a complete surprise, I think, that they were successful in their dealings. It was obviously relatively well known that they had the long-range missiles capability because they were employed against Teheran, you recall, in the inter-city war in the end of the Iraq-Iran war.

LITTLEJOHNS: Ambassador, what about their nuclear programme? How far -- how well was it advanced?

EKEUS: The IAEA, the International Atomic Energy Agency is foremost responsible for that, but we also support them in their efforts. And it was -- appears now in most recent revelations to have been much more advanced than we foresaw only, say, a couple of months ago.

DERGHAM: Ambassador, given what Iraq has of its capability right now, what's left, does it constitute a major threat to the region, to the countries in the region? Does it have the capability right now whereas it would lead you to say, yes, they have weapons that constitute a major threat to the region?

EKEUS: No, I think we can say that we don't believe they are capable to be a threat to the region. And the reason is they don't have enough missiles. As I indicated, there may be some stocks of chemical warfare agents and biological warfare agents. But there is a definite bottleneck for delivery of these systems. Also they have bombs, of course, empty munitions, which can be filled with agents, theoretically. But even that, I think there are such shortcomings with regard to the air force, and so on, so I don't -- I think we can stay with our early assessment: Iraq does not, cannot have a real security -- establish a security threat against the region with the help of these weapons.

DERGHAM: So what you're concentrating on right now is to make sure that the past programmes are clarified and accounted for.

LITTLEJOHNS: What programmes?

DERGHAM: Past programmes.

LITTLEJOHNS: Past, yes.

DERGHAM: Past programmes are accounted for. Do you worry sometimes that if you push too much -- not you only, Rolf Ekeus, but if the Security Council altogether pushes too much and goes on demanding without acknowledging how much the Iraqis cooperated, does this lead you to worry that probably Baghdad will say, well, look, the

more we cooperate, the more we are told that you haven't done it, particularly the last revelations. So, are you worried at times? Are you afraid?

EKEUS: Indeed, we're -- yes. We are tied up together, both UN and Iraq, in this very difficult issue. But it is obviously not only the past programmes that are worrying us, it is also Iraq's capability to re-establish its programmes. And there we have put in place we think quite a solid control system. But the quality of that must be tested a little against the background of potential hidden capabilities. So we have to sort these things out. But having said that, again, coming back to your punchline, namely, it is clear that if Iraq really makes a serious effort to clear up these things, it is an obligation for the international community, the UN, to react positively, and to give the Iraqi side some hope. If the situation would be dark, hopeless, I think we can run into some very serious difficulties head on, which would come head on.

LITTLEJOHNS: Ambassador, the Security Council has already given Iraq, the Iraqi Government, the possibility of selling \$3 billion worth of oil for various purposes. Why didn't they accept that? Did they explain to you why they didn't?

EKEUS: Yes. Of course, it's for Iraq to decide. Well, I think Iraq is aiming at getting a complete release, lifting of the oil embargo first off.

LITTLEJOHNS: According to what you've just been telling us, that could be months or even years away.

EKEUS: Yes. Well, I guess there is a concern from the Iraqi side, if I understand them correctly, that this could be a permanent arrangement of limited sales of oil, which, also where the profits from these sales should be monitored and controlled to a considerable degree. And as a long-term process, I think the Iraqi side feels this is a -- gives them serious concern. And again, I think they fear this would be put in place of a complete and permanent lifting of the embargo.

GOODMAN: One area which I think you believe has been cleared up is the questions of scuds. You know how many they bought, I think it was in the neighbourhood of 800 or 900, and how many roughly were used against Iran, how many in the gulf war. Are you quite now satisfied that they have no more? I ask because it's obviously impossible for you to look under every hedge and every Iraqi leader's bed to see whether he has a scud there. How do you go about doing that?

EKEUS: We are quite firm in our knowledge. Also, the most recent revelations, that Iraq's acquisition of weapons is still a firm number. We know how many weapons they had acquired, scuds. But our problem is obviously if Iran made some internal production. And now Iraq has admitted that it has produced a number of home-made scuds, if I may say.

GOODMAN: Modified their scuds?

EKEUS: No, they used the model and produced their own engine and airframe. They had to take spare parts for the guidance system, which is a very difficult part of a missile. So that they produced three such more missiles indigenously.

GOODMAN: You mean three units, or three types?

EKEUS: Three units, three pieces, three missiles. Which of course raised our concern. But I don't think they managed to make much more. That sets up our arithmetic a little, but I don't think it changes or rocks our total.

GOODMAN: And some of these biological and chemical weapons were mounted on warheads, actually mounted on scud warheads, were they?

EKEUS: They were put on warheads for this other thing, which is a modified long-range variety of the scud, yes.

GOODMAN: And so about 200 were biological?

EKEUS: No, there were 20 -- altogether, missiles, there were altogether 25 warhead missiles. There were 150 bombs, altogether, bacteriological bombs.

DERGHAM: Ambassador Ekeus, let me bring you back to the political situation a bit, if you would kindly give your opinion. As you know, after the events of August in Baghdad there was the expectation that there may be a change in the regime in Baghdad. And as it looks there are no such imminent signs that the regime of Saddam Hussein will fall. Now the other impression is that everything is going to be put on hold in terms of lifting the oil embargo and implementation of paragraph 22, which is the base of your work. After --

LITTLEJOHNS: Paragraph 22 of the Security Council resolution.

DERGHAM: Which linked between Ambassador Ekeus's report that Iraq has complied fully and the lifting of the oil embargo. The general feeling is that this is not going to be allowed by the United States until after the elections. That leaves us actually with both Saddam Hussein in power and the sanctions in power. Do you find there is any moral dilemma with that, leaving the Iraqi people at the mercy of continuity of the status quo, that is, both the regime and the sanctions, and we have children starving? Do you feel there is a moral problem there?

EKEUS: On the first question, I'm not quite sure that the elections are the decisive -- that's a result of certain discussions and analytical conclusions that the elections in one of the Member States is decisive here. I think we have to recognize that the resolution language is there. And obviously the members of the Security Council put their political interpretation into this language. And we will see how that works out. I'm not quite sure that one should put in the prognosis in the line of saying this will take a very,

very long time. I think the situation is more, so to say, flexible and open for that. However, it's obviously a problem for the United Nations as such to see the hardship of the Iraqi people. However, it is a very clear way outlined for the Iraqi leadership to follow. So they could make it easy by moving quickly on that line.

It would not be right, I think, to circumvent these rules. Because, say, it would not be humane, for instance, to allow Iraq to keep biological engines which could be used for devastating effects, enormous suffering to huge cities and to the population in the area. So one has to balance off these humanitarian concerns. Biological weapons are fundamentally inhumane weapons.

LITTLEJOHNS: But the ball is still in the Iraqi court. I mean, I referred earlier to the \$3 billion worth of oil that they could sell. That would greatly relieve the problems of the Iraqi people. So why blame the Security Council or the United Nations community or the United States or the other countries which are not crazy about lifting the embargo when it's already available to them to sell?

EKEUS: Yes. 986 is the resolution there, and it's the sale of a large amount of oil, to use this money for food and medicine. That's clear.

LITTLEJOHNS: We have only a few seconds left, Raghida.

DERGHAM: All right. What was called the Saddam Hussein clause, that is that both President Bush and John Major, at one time they said it is -- that sanctions will remain until Saddam Hussein falls. It seems that it's back without such pronouncement during this Clinton administration. Is this your feeling, and is this what you think will happen? That sanctions will stay as long as Saddam Hussein is in power, no matter you conclude on paragraph 22?

LITTLEJOHNS: A very brief reply, please.

EKEUS: Well, the President, Saddam Hussein, is the one who decides policy. If he takes a negative line, he is the cause of the negative result. If he takes a positive line, obviously he will have the price of having helped.

LITTLEJOHNS: Ambassador Ekeus, that's all the time we have. Thank you as always for being with us on this edition of World Chronicle.

Our guest has been Rolf Ekeus, Executive Chairman of the United Nations Special Commission on Iraq. He was interviewed by Anthony Goodman of Reuters, and Raghida Dergham of *Al-Hayat* of London. I'm Michael Littlejohns. Thank you for joining us. We invite you to be with us for the next edition of World Chronicle.

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